

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE

TO AMEMBASSY MANILA

INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 8085

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

C O N F I D E N T I A L LIBREVILLE 1440

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINR, PFOR, GB

SUBJ: NEW GABONESE AMBASSADOR TO PHILIPPINES

REF: MANILA POL OM OF JULY 7

1. IN ANTICIPATION OF BONGO STATE VISIT (MANILA 10124) AND IN HOPE OF CLOSE BILATERAL RELATIONS, GOG RECENTLY NAMED JOACHIM PALLARD AS FIRST GABONESE AMBASSADOR TO PHILLIPPINES.

2. PALLARD, EX-ARMY OFFICER, HAS BEEN IN DIPLOMATIC SERVICE SINCE 1966, AND HAS SERVED AS COUNSELOR IN JERUSALEM (1966-69) AND TOKYO (1972-74) AND AS AMBASSADOR IN BEIRUT (1974-75). ONLY REPORT ON HIS EFFECTIVENESS DURING THESE YEARS CAME FROM ISRAEL SHORTLY AFTER HIS POSTING THERE WHEN HE WAS ALLEGED TO BE EXERCISING "NEFARIOUS INFLUENCE" OVER NATIONALS OF OTHER AFRICAN STATES.

3. BORN IN 1921, PALLARD SERVED IN FRENCH ARMY FROM 1940 UNTIL 1961, ACHIEVING RANK OF ADJUTANT-CHEF. SWITCHING TO GABONESE ARMY IN 1961 SHORTLY AFTER INDEPENDENCE, PALLARD ROSE FROM LIEUTENANT TO CAPTAIN IN 1963 AND MAJOR IN
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1965, AT WHICH TIME HE COMMANDED FLEDGLING ARMY'S SOLE

INFANTRY BATTALION. THOUGH DECORATED FOR HIS ROLE AT TIME OF ATTEMPTED COUP AGAINST FIRST PRESIDENT LEON M'BA IN 1964, PALLARD CAME UNDER SUSPICION IN 1966 DURING PERIOD OF TRANSITION FROM M'BA TO CURRENT PRESIDENT BONGO. RUMORS OF INVOLVEMENT IN PLOTTING PRESUMABLY LED TO HIS TRANSFER INTO DIPLOMATIC SERVICE, AND HE WAS FORMALLY RETIRED FROM GABONESE ARMY IN 1967 WHILE SERVING IN JERUSALEM.

4. EMBASSY HAS HAD VIRTUALLY NO CONTACT WITH PALLARD OVER PAST DECADE, BUT KNEW HIM DURING ARMY SERVICE AS ABLE AND ARTICULATE OFFICER WITH GOOD ADMINISTRATIVE ABILITY. HE WAS CONSIDERED AT THE TIME BOTH ANTI-COMMUNIST AND FRIENDLY TO THE US, AND WAS KNOWN AS A MAN ABOUT TOWN WHO OFTEN PAID LITTLE ATTENTION TO HIS WIFE AND TEN CHILDREN. PALLARD WAS (AND PERHAPS STILL IS) BOTH SMOKER AND DRINKER, WITH PREFERENCE FOR BEER AND SCOTCH.

5. EMBASSY WOULD WELCOME ANY CURRENT IMPRESSIONS OF PALLARD DEVELOPED BY EMBASSY MANILA DURING HIS SERVICE IN PHILIPPINES. STEIGMAN

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